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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: Kyrgyzstan: Media Reaction to Under Secretary Burns's Visit

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The visit of Under Secretary Burns was widely covered by local media. There was same-day television and internet coverage which reported only the facts. Pro-governmental news outlets, including the Kyrgyz Television and Radio Company (KTR) spun the visit as an endorsement of President Bakiyev's "Bishkek Initiative" on Afghanistan. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On July 13, "Vechernyi Bishkek" published a full transcript of Under Secretary Burns's press conference. It also included the following comment on Under Secretary Burns's meeting with President Bakiyev, which was not open to the press: "The United States highly appreciates and supports Bakiyev's 'Bishkek Initiative' to hold talks on Afghanistan regulation. This theme was discussed on Saturday, June 11, in the State Residency during Bakiyev's talks with Under Secretary Burns."

¶3. (SBU) On July 14, private, pro-governmental newspaper "MSN" commented: "The militant rhetoric and lecturing tone gave way to a carpet diplomacy. The edictal finger from overseas was changed to a friendly smile and wish to compromise [...] In a word, we were told once more that we are not playing our own game. The elders will decide. But both Uncle Sam and big-hearted Russia have to consider the opinion of Kyrgyzstan, a small country with a very tough character."

¶4. (SBU) On July 14, the Kyrgyz insert of "Komsomolskaya Pravda" wrote: "After the Kyrgyz President signed the Agreement on the Transit Center on July 2, it became clear that a Renaissance in our relations with the United States is coming, and signs of it were not long in arriving. [...] Of course, the main topic of the talks was the Transit Center."

¶5. (SBU) On July 15, anti-American "Delo Nomer" highlighted the visit in light of rumors that the Russians plan to open a military base in Osh, Kyrgyzstan: "Against expectations, the high-level U.S. representative's attitude towards the intensification of the Russian military presence in Kyrgyzstan was not just diplomatic, but even favorable. 'Such steps to strengthen security and stability in the country are sensible,' said William Burns. [Note: In actuality, the Under Secretary said, 'Any such decision is obviously the sovereign

right of the government of Kyrgyzstan. Our view is that any step that strengthens the sovereignty and independence and security of Kyrgyzstan is a sensible one. But as I said, any such decision is a sovereign decision of the government here." End Note.] As for the current symbol of the American military presence, the newborn Transit Center, the U.S. Under Secretary promised Kyrgyzstan: 'The work of the Center will be transparent, and the United States will use best efforts on its part [to ensure transparency].'

LITZENBERGER